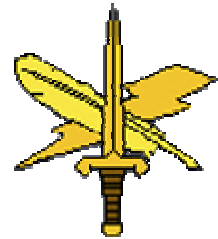




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**Public Affairs Office
Fort Riley, KS 66442
Telephone (785) 239-3033/3410 FAX (785) 239-2592
After Hours (785) 239-2222
E-mail: stephanie.perrin@riley.army.mil or
skidmord@riley.army.mil
www.riley.army.mil**



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT
Stephanie Perrin, Assistant Media Relations Officer (785) 239-3033

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STUDENTS EXPERIENCE SOLDIER LIFE

By Mike Heronemus
Editor

About 80 elementary students from Junction City, Kan., got a morning introduction to life as a Soldier May 5.

Eight 101st Forward Support Battalion Soldiers served as squad leaders for the fourth- and fifth-grade students from Sheridan Elementary School as part of the battalion's open house for students in the morning and family members in the afternoon.

The student squads experienced a muddy convoy in "Humvees," moving through a dark room while wearing night vision goggles, watching medics treat simulated battle injuries, seeing how commanders set up a control center to direct battle activities, trying to march, testing their physical skills on an obstacle course and using the laser Weaponeer to test their marksmanship with an M-16.

Principal Nancy Hubbard summed up the whole morning as enjoyable and educational. She accompanied one of the student squads, also participating in the activities. Her squad had a lot of fun, she said, and from all the excited yells and laughter she heard as she went from station to station in the battalion's motor pool, Hubbard said there was no doubt all the students were really into the interaction with the Soldiers.

"It was really fun and kind of scary," Samantha Hurst said about trying to walk through the dark room. Four of her friends agreed it was a little scary because they bumped into things and one Soldier scared them by yelling and jumping at them.

Most of the girls agreed the convoy ride in the "Humvees" was a lot more fun because it was a muddy trip, the wheels would spin and the Soldiers drove between trees so close together their branches slapped the sides of the vehicles.

Hubbard said she was amazed at the communications technology and at how the Soldiers could keep track of where everyone is and that was what impressed her most. What the Soldiers demonstrated, even when marching, was that it takes education to do

things well, she said. She hoped the students would take that lesson back to school with them.

“We’ll be emphasizing that later,” she said, but admitted that the students would probably be talking most about “what’s on our faces,” pointing to the camouflage paint she was wearing, and about riding in the “Humvees,” shooting the Weaponeer and even trying to march – all the fun interactive things the battalion had provided.

“We’re glad we got to do it,” Hubbard said. The trip was difficult to schedule because of conflicting state assessment testing, said Lt. Col. Christopher McCurry, battalion commander.

“It was hard to scheduled buses at the end of the year,” Hubbard added.

The open house came after several months of reviving a school sponsorship program between the 101st FSB and Sheridan Elementary, McCurry said. Each battalion on post is assigned a school to sponsor, he explained.

McCurry sends 11 of his Soldiers to Sheridan every Wednesday to help out 2 1/2 hours. They help students with their class work and spend some non-class time with them at lunch.

“All the students look forward to the Soldiers coming every week,” Hubbard said. “There’s at least one Soldier for each classroom.”

The sponsorship and interaction between the Soldiers and the students is important, Hubbard said, “because we’re right here, (the post and Soldiers) are part of the community.”